

Interracial News Service

A DIGEST OF TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN HUMAN RELATIONS

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A ROUNDUP— The Churches' Concern

About Racial Tensions

The Churches Say About Montgomery:

Clergymen and church groups in various parts of the country have pledged their support to Negroes in their struggle against segregation in Montgomery, Alabama. Many expressions of encouragement and assurance have been sent to the people in Montgomery.

In a telegram, Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, president of the *National Council of Churches*, assured "the churches and our fellow-Christians" who find themselves in "agonizing situations" of "our sympathy and prayers and of our resolution to assist them in ways that may be helpful."

The National Council also released a statement from Dr. Paul S. Wright of Portland, Ore., moderator of the *Presbyterian Church* in the U. S. A. Dr. Wright praised the Montgomery Negroes for "the intelligent and orderly manner in which they have stood together in their protest against an injustice no longer tolerable in a democratic society."

The board of directors of the *New Haven Council of Churches* adopted a resolution upholding Montgomery, Ala. Negro clergymen and their followers who have been indicted for leading a boycott of segregated bus transportation.

The resolution expressed "shock and dismay over the disregard for the normal rights of individuals or groups to protest an injustice." It authorized a committee to work with other organizations in a movement to observe a Day of Prayer on March 28 for the Montgomery Negroes.

American Baptists are urged to pray "in penitence and humility" that "terrifying tensions" which have developed in race relations may be softened. The plea was made in the form of a resolution by the executive committee of the Council on Christian Social Progress of the *American Baptist Convention*, meeting in Washington, D. C., March 4, 5, and 6. Frankly confessing that northerners also are guilty of racial prejudices, the resolution called upon Baptists to "give themselves to self-examination and prayer" concerning the "racial cleavages and animosities into which Americans have fallen." "In the spirit of Christian self-criticism we feel deeply disturbed and convicted of sin at what has happened in Montgomery and Tuscaloosa, and all too frequently in our own communities in other regions. . . ."

The *Youngstown, Ohio Ministerial Association* sent a letter to the Mayor of Montgomery, Ala., expressing hope that "the question of seats on public transportation" will be quickly solved "in a Christian way." The ministers said that they were "deeply concerned" about tensions in some parts of the country over the movement away from segregation to "a more democratic way of life." Meanwhile, they suggested that individual clergymen and laymen write to Mayor W. A. Gayle of Montgomery, calling attention to "the worth of each person in the sight of God."

The *Interchurch Council of Greater New Bedford, Massachusetts* urged its 48 member churches to unite at a mass prayer meeting March 28 in sympathy with the Montgomery, Ala. boycott against segregated buses. Each member church was asked to send a delegation to an hour-long prayer meeting at 7:30 that night in Union Baptist church.

The *Massachusetts House of Representatives* voted to suspend all activity from 11 A.M. to noon on March 28 in sympathy with the bus boycott. The House resolution, adopted

on a voice vote without debate, specifies the day will be noted in the House journal as "Brotherhood Day."

Local clergymen and theologians from Princeton seminary joined in a service of intercession for Negro ministers leading the bus boycott at Montgomery, Ala. Sponsored by the *Princeton Pastors Association*, it was one of a growing number of expressions of sympathy by religious groups for the Montgomery Negro cause. Students of Princeton seminary held a similar service and 127 of them signed a letter addressed to all clergymen in Montgomery expressing concern over the "extreme difficulties" faced by ministers there. A rabbi and 21 white and Negro clergymen of Princeton University and the town shared the reading of Scriptures at the ministerial service.

Moments of silent prayer for a "dignified and honorable" solution to the segregation problem were observed in churches and synagogues throughout the oceanside area of New York City under the auspices of the *Religious Council of the Rockaways and the Five Towns* in New York. The prayer campaign was called in a resolution adopted by the Council. It supported the protests of Montgomery, Ala. ministers against "a custom based on unjustified prejudice" and scored the arrest of the clergymen for violating the little-used Alabama anti-boycott law.

The *West Virginia Council of Churches* sent a letter to the mayor of Montgomery, Ala. saying that Negroes there have a "just cause" in their boycott of bus transportation. It said, in part, "We have offered prayers for you and all your citizens, both Negro and white. We share widespread unhappiness over the current grand jury indictment of scores of your citizens. We feel that, even under your own law, these citizens have a just cause to uphold, therefore we cannot think that they are guilty of a conspiratorial crime. May God help you, your citizens, and your law enforcement officers to find a Christian solution to your problem."

Eighty-six students and faculty members of *Union Theological Seminary, New York*, wired their encouragement to more than 2,000 Montgomery Negroes gathered at a mass prayer meeting to bolster their boycott of Jim Crow buses. In their message, the students and faculty members said: "Your courageous stand in the battle of the Negro people of Montgomery against injustice has won the admiration of millions of people across the world. We, as young Protestant clergymen and seminary students representing many races, states and denominations, want you to know of our support of your position and the Christian position which it represents."

In *Hartford, Conn.* Protestants, Roman Catholics and Jews took part in the national "Day of Prayer for Democracy" on March 28th following a call from their religious leaders. Issuing statements were Roman Catholic Archbishop Henry J. O'Brien of Hartford, Bishop Walter H. Gray of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, seven of the city's leading rabbis, and Carl E. Lindstrom, president of the Greater Hartford Council of Churches. The statement by the seven rabbis said: "In the spirit of the Festival of Passover, the festival of freedom, we invite our fellow Jews to assemble in the synagogue and raise our hearts and voices in supplication to the Father of us all to liberate all His children from the shackles of modern slavery in the guise of prejudice and discrimination wherever they may exist." They added that "injustice such as that perpetrated against Negroes in Montgomery undermine the basis of American democracy."

March 28th was designated as "Deliverance Day" by religious leaders in *Los Angeles, California* and a special service was held on March 28th at First Unitarian Church. A letter was sent from the church which said: "We wish to associate ourselves with all those persons . . . in Montgomery, who are offering such superb, non-violent resistance to this . . . survival of man's inhumanity to man. As a church which is interracial . . . we wish to add our strength and to aid as best we can all the victims of this struggle . . ."

In *New York City* a prayer meeting and rally was attended by 5,000 persons at Manhattan Center. The Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. called for "a crisis program clergy-led, church-caused, prayer-propelled, ready any hour of the day or night to counteract men who hate and men of ill will." At another meeting, Reform Jews gathered in prayer at the House of Living Judaism. Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, asserted that "segregation is wrong, not only because it is illegal, but also because Christianity and Judaism declare it to be immoral." Friendship House, a Roman Catholic lay organization, called on its 40,000 members and friends to abstain from all solid foods on March 28th in a fast to protest the treatment of leaders of the Montgomery boycott. The ministers of fifty Negro Baptist churches in Queens and Long Island held services at noon and 8 P.M. each day during that week. The money taken in collections is being sent to assist the protest in Montgomery.

In Chicago, Ill., 28,000 attended services. Most were held in 300 Negro Baptist churches.

Other major cities in which special services were held included Columbus, Ohio; Cleveland, Los Angeles, Baton Rouge, Galveston and Atlanta.

(The editors)

Dayton Institute on Church and Race

The purpose of the Institute was to further the spirit of Christian togetherness and to face up to our responsibility and opportunity as individual Christians and churches in the important and critical area of our social life—race relations.

The delegates came together to examine their own attitudes with searching honesty; to study the teachings of our Christian faith and our churches about human brotherhood; to learn the facts about our own community and to discuss calmly and intelligently with Christian friends the real issues of our community life; to pray for God's help in becoming more Christlike in all their thoughts and words in relationship with other people, and to establish personal and Christian friendships with members of other races. . . .

. . . Suggestions for each individual and each church to act upon came out of the discussion groups that met for two evenings. (Some of them follow:)

Each individual must explore his own reservoir of personal emotions in the light of his Christian faith.

Think of the Negro or the white person as an individual, not as a member of a group.

By word and action set a good example for others.

Patronize unsegregated places of business.

Support and encourage those who have the courage to pioneer in social advance.

Impress upon realtors, business men, educators, etc. their Christian responsibility in this field.

Churches are encouraged to enlarge their programs to meet the needs of their surrounding communities.

Churches in blended (racially-mixed) communities are encouraged to foster educational and recreational activities that will lead to fellowship and better understanding.

Churches are urged to study the problems of race relations especially in the area of housing; to study its own denominational standards and goals in this area of life. The unsegregated church in the unsegregated society is the ultimate goal of most every denominational group. Study should be made and action should be planned accordingly.

(Report on Church and Race Institute, Church Federation of greater Dayton, Ohio, September 18-20, 1955).

Pilot Project—West Virginia Churches

A corps of 20 white and Negro leaders from all parts of West Virginia was organized to help communities throughout the state bring about integration in schools, churches, and other fields in "a peaceful Christian way."

The group was formed as a "pilot project in human relations" under the joint sponsorship of the West Virginia Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches' department of racial and cultural relations.

Its work will be directed by Mrs. Annabelle Chandler of Charleston, a religious education specialist.

Dr. Alfred Kramer of New York, associate executive director of the National Council department, and the Rev. Jarrett T. Chandler, executive secretary of the State Council, said the project is the first of its kind sponsored by church groups and is expected to serve as a guide for similar ones in other states.

The purpose of the program, they said, is not to "step in and try to tell the courts and school officials when and how to end segregation but, as they take this step, to have a group ready to help concerned people understand and solve the problems of transition."

Those chosen on the panel are educators, clergymen, physicians, parents, and others with community leadership experience and personally familiar, as residents of the state, with the problems in the integration process, Dr. Kramer and Mr. Chandler said.

"They will not force any ideas upon the community but will go with an open mind, with convictions and a desire to help through the formation—at the request of local communities and without cost to them—of educational panels, seminars, and discussions groups," the officials said, adding:

"This program has been initiated because of our Christian conviction that 'God is no respecter of persons' and that all persons are precious in His sight. It is hoped that it will aid local communities as they move to accomplish what is in keeping with the spirit of democracy, our Constitution, and the decision of the highest court in the land."

The two church leaders said Christians "are challenged with the new interpretation and pattern of brotherhood which the Supreme Court's decision has engendered in America."

"Christians are called upon to face the implications of this issue with honesty and integrity and to participate in constructive solutions," they said. "We see it as the role of the church to apply Christian foresight, patience, and forbearing understanding as these new adjustments are faced and made." (Christian Science Monitor, March 30).

Message from Massachusetts Council

The Protestant churches of Massachusetts were called on (Friday, March 23) "to lead their people in such programs of education and action as may contribute to the lessening of racial tensions, and the establishment of full equality and justice for all our people, and the elimination of all segregation because of race."

The statement was voted unanimously by the board of directors of the Massachusetts Council of Churches. . . .

It suggested the following specific projects:

1. Set aside special occasions for prayer, beginning with the hour of 12 noon to 1 p.m. on March 28, for Divine guidance in achieving the goals of integration by peaceful means.
2. Promote discussions designed to re-examine the religious and political basis of human rights as set forth in the Bible and in the Constitution of the United States.
3. Rigorously examine the patterns of race relations in our Massachusetts churches and communities and work for their improvement. Work toward integrated churches, integrated housing and integrated clubs and integration in other aspects of our life.
4. Cultivate more personal and family friendships across racial lines.
5. Contribute money to civil rights defense funds, and to the National Council of Churches' Department of Racial and Cultural Relations and to the comparable agency of your own denomination for leadership in areas of tension in respect to race problems.

6. Write to your representative and senators in Washington relative to more adequate governmental action to support civil rights, and especially to deal with economic aspects of the present race problem.
7. Write to ministers and congregations of your own or other denominations in areas of special racial tension expressing Christian concern in the struggle for equality and freedom and offer your continued moral and spiritual support.
(News, Massachusetts Council of Churches, March 24).

Methodist Opinion Poll

The majority of Methodists think there should be no segregation of races in the church, according to a nation-wide opinion poll. . . .

Dr. Murray H. Leiffer of Evanston, Ill., director of the Bureau of Social and Religious Research and a professor of social ethics and sociology in Garrett Biblical Institute, conducted the survey and wrote a series of articles on his findings.

A spokesman for the denomination pointed out the timeliness of the opinion poll on racial matters inasmuch as the question of segregation in the church is expected to be one of the major items to be discussed at the church's General Conference in Minneapolis, Minn., April 25-May 9.

The opinion poll was conducted on a scientific sampling of all sections of the country and all segments of the church, Dr. Leiffer explained.

One section of the questionnaire read: "There is much discussion throughout the church and the nation about removing segregation barriers in the public schools, transportation, voting, etc. Which of the following do you think should be the policy of the church?"

In answer to this question, 56.4 per cent checked the third option: "Remove all barriers, receiving into the local church all who meet the tests of character and take the membership vows, regardless of economic status or race."

Slightly more than 16 per cent wanted to "have all churches serve either Negroes or whites exclusively." Having "some separate churches for each group and some inclusive churches" was favored by 23.8 per cent.

Replies favoring a policy of segregation in the churches came in greatest numbers from the southeastern states. Only 25.9 per cent from this region favored removing all barriers and 37.8 per cent favored segregated churches. About a third of those replying from the southeastern states agreed to the establishment of some racially inclusive churches. Typical of replies from this section were these: "Community not ready. They (Negroes) have their own churches." "In our situation neither race is ready for integration. To have such forced upon us will be most unfortunate."

While every section of the country had at least a small number who supported a segregation policy, a clear majority favored removal of all barriers (56.4 per cent). Most liberal in this respect were the people of the western states, where four out of five saw no need for any segregated churches and only 6.5 per cent voted for complete segregation.

The study showed that people who attend church more regularly are somewhat more tolerant on the matter of a policy of inclusiveness. Fifty-seven per cent of those attending church regularly favored removing all barriers, while the group who seldom attend church registered 46 per cent in favor of non-segregated churches.

Age as a factor is also revealed in the study. In general, the younger the person the more prepared he is for a policy of non-segregation in the churches. The group 18 to 24 years of age voted 67.3 per cent in favor of removing all barriers, while those over 65 years of age were 53.4 per cent in favor of taking down race barriers.

Education also enters into the equation, Dr. Leiffer's studies show. Methodists who have had more education are somewhat better prepared to remove barriers to church membership on the basis of race. Only 46.8 per cent of those with less than a high school education favored removing all barriers, while the college graduates voted 61 per cent in favor of such a move. *(News, Commission on Public Relations and Methodist Information, March 15).*

Ministers Take The Lead

The nation's ministers are giving their full in spiritual support for the efforts of the nation's 15 million Negroes in their efforts to gain full citizenship.

News reports from Guide writers from all parts of the nation show Men of Cloth stepping into the forefront of the fight and making their presence felt. Some of the stories, in brief follow:

A minister has urged the Birmingham City Commission to employ Negro policemen to help "cement good faith and establish better relations."

The Rev. George Rudolph, in a letter to commissioners . . . called attention to other southern cities that effectively use Negro policemen.

Birmingham is the only major city in the South where Negroes have been barred from jobs on the police force.

White and Negro members of two Presbyterian churches in New York exchanged places recently for religious services in a demonstration of racial desegregation.

More than 100 white members of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church intermingled with Negro members of the Church of the Master. At the same time, the Harlem church sent an equal number of its congregation to the white church.

The Rev. David H. C. Read, former chaplain of Queen Elizabeth in Scotland, preached to the mixed congregation in his own church. At the Church of the Master, the Rev. James Robinson preached the sermon.

More than 1,000 Negroes staged a fund-raising meeting in New Orleans . . . in support of the Montgomery bus boycott and threatened a similar anti-segregation demonstration.

Speaking at the Union Bethel AME Church, the Rev A. L. Davis, Jr., president of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance warned that the Montgomery boycott may spread to New Orleans.

The Rev. Morris Burrell, chairman of the meeting, told the group: "Those people in Montgomery are making a death struggle for us, even though we do not feel the immediate brunt of hardship those people are going through. It may well be us tomorrow."

The two ministers called for an organization of 100,000 Negroes to help fight segregation on the city's buses and in hotels. *(Norfolk Journal and Guide, March 24).*

Moral leadership is being mobilized in the North to help southern communities over their integration troubles. . . .

One outcropping of brotherly interest was the volunteering of 200 northern ministers, Negro and white, to fill the pulpits of 25 Negro ministers of Montgomery, Ala., who went on trial March 19 for their part in organizing a boycott of the city's segregated buses.

Appealed to by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the ministers agreed to lend their active support to the Montgomery Negroes' passive-resistance movement. Said the Rev. John M. Swomley, Jr., national secretary of the organization, "they obviously share our conviction that the nonviolent campaign represents the most helpful and significant development that has come out of this struggle so far."

Among those who signed the statement were:

John Haynes Holmes, minister emeritus, Community Church, New York; Rt. Rev. Charles F. Boynton, Bishop, Episcopal Church, New York; Edwin T. Dahlberg, former president, American Baptist Convention, St. Louis; Halford Luccock, professor emeritus, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn.; Harold Johnson, pastor, First Baptist Church, Boulder, Colo.; William Lindsay Young, former moderator, Presbyterian church; E. Fay Campbell, director student work, Presbyterian Church; Donald Harrington, pastor, Community Church, New York. *(Christian Science Monitor, March 19).*

Knoxville Association of Ministers . . . unanimously agreed in a three-point resolution to aid in the desegregation of state public schools.

KAM members are composed of Protestant pastors and are headed by the Rev. W. T. Crutcher, pastor of Mt. Olive Baptist Church.

In a resolution introduced by the Rev. Ralph L. Murray, pastor of Smithwood Baptist Church and chairman of the Interracial Committee, the group agreed that:

1. "Integration of schools is in accordance with the moral laws of God which are without barriers of prejudice;
2. "As Christians, we are bound to obey the civil laws and the Supreme Court decisions which are the law of our land.
3. "And as Christian ministers, we agree to assist every positive means at our disposal in helping our people and community to proceed rapidly and orderly as possible with integration of public schools."

Full cooperation to PTAs and preaching sermons on "race relations" to aid the interracial movement was pledged by the organization.

The pastors also urged study and discussion groups among members and to use every opportunity to address civic groups to encourage the movement. (*Afro-American*, February 18).

Church Group Calls for Conference

The National Council of Churches has asked President Dwight D. Eisenhower to call a bi-racial conference on racial issues and tensions.

The request was made by telegram during a consultation on "The Present Role of Church-related Schools in the Southeast" at Atlanta University February 26-28.

The telegram, . . . read

"We, the sixty members of a bi-racial consultation on the Role of Church Related Schools and Colleges in the Southeast, representing 27 schools and colleges of seven denominations in nine states, convened by the Division of Home Missions of the National Council of Churches, attest the value of the bi-racial approach and prayerfully beseech you to call a bi-racial conference on racial issues and tensions. We further respectfully suggest the members of such conference be selected both as citizens and as persons of religious faiths." . . . (*Georgia Methodist Information*, March 5).

Texas Churches Speak

Resolutions condemning racial discrimination and expressing "humiliation" over an alleged "lack of concern for integration" shown by some state officials were adopted by the Texas Council of Churches at its annual meeting . . .

The council also called upon members of its 11 affiliated Protestant denominations to "fight the doctrine of interposition" being advocated in some southern states as a means of avoiding compliance with the U. S. Supreme Court ban on segregation in the schools.

"We rejoice that there are in the State of Texas many communities which have gone on a completely integrated basis," the resolutions said. "But we have been disturbed by certain recent trends indicating opposition to compliance with the Supreme Court ruling." (*Religious News Service*, March 14).

New York Times Survey

Some form of compliance with the Supreme Court's order to desegregate the public schools seems inevitable in most Southern states—perhaps in all.

That is the over-all impression gained by ten reporters of *The New York Times* who recently spent five weeks investigating the progress of desegregation. They visited seventeen states and the District of Columbia. . . .

The reporters' findings, in general, are as follows:

A majority of Southerners want to deal with the problem of integration by legal means. They usually disavow violence and are afraid of it, although there still may be sporadic outbreaks.

Generally white Southerners seem more troubled, confused and resentful than rebellious. They are troubled by the demand that they make a radical change in their settled and preferred social patterns. They are confused by the dilemma that confronts them—how to preserve the structure of their society and yet comply with the law of the land. They are resentful of badgering by outsiders.

While seeking adjustment, they are resisting drastic change by various devices to nullify, delay or moderate the impact of desegregation.

Southern Negroes likewise are troubled and sometimes resentful. In the main, they want the rights vouchsafed to them by the highest court in the land. In some cases hesitantly, in others resolutely, they are demanding the admission of their children to mixed schools.

The interplay of white and Negro forces has so far produced a patchwork pattern in the eighteen public school systems. The degree of school integration ranges from nil in Mississippi to complete in the nation's capital.

The commonest index to the degree of compliance is the ratio of Negro population to white in any given area. Where the ratio is low integration is proceeding; where it is high there is resistance.

But how long can resistance continue?

White spokesmen talk of staving off the unwelcome day for twenty to twenty-five years. The very fact that they set a limit on their hopes suggests that they foresee eventual integration.

Age-old community alignments and customs are changing in the South. The Negro is gaining political and economic power. Among the whites, youth is less adamant than age. (*New York Times*, March 13).

Copies of this survey are available from the *New York Times* at 5c each.

The matter in these pages is presented for the reader's information. Unless so stated, it is not to be construed as reflecting the attitudes or positions of the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations or of The National Council of Churches.

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